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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 28, 2007

## **NJMC Celebrates 25 Years of Education at the Meadowlands Environment Center**

*Extends Contract with Ramapo College of New Jersey to Operate MEC through 2012*

LYNDHURST, N.J. – Commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Meadowlands Environment Center, the NJMC Board of Commissioners today received an overview from Ramapo College of New Jersey on a growing number of educational classes and field trips for students, convocations, camps, community outreach programs, professional development workshops for teachers, programs for seniors and people living with disabilities. Following the presentation, the Board voted to extend the contract with Ramapo for five years.

“We are proud of the dedication Ramapo College educators have shown to inspire awareness and stewardship of the Meadowlands and its wildlife,” said NJMC Chairwoman Susan Bass Levin, also the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. “The Meadowlands Environment Center has grown into a living laboratory, a prime example of how public policy and higher education can be harmonized to better the environment.”

The NJMC entered into an agreement with Ramapo College of New Jersey to operate the Meadowlands Environment Center in 2003. The facility houses classrooms, an Interactive Learning Center, Marsh Diorama, 250-seat Auditorium, Flyway Gallery for local and environmental art exhibits, and Marsh Pavilion overlooking the Hackensack River and the New York City skyline. It was constructed by the NJMC in 1982. Through today’s vote, the Board has allocated \$1.6 million to Ramapo College to staff the MEC and provide additional programming through 2012.

Approximately 20,000 people visit the MEC each year, including students, residents, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and visiting eco-tourists. More than 600 teachers attend workshops to incorporate wetlands studies and environmental education into classroom curriculum materials. As part of a Pilot Field School sponsored by the NJMC, the entire freshman class of Lyndhurst High School is studying earth sciences at the MEC, including water sampling for pH and dissolved oxygen, chemical analysis of types and impacts of fossil fuels, and the physics of force and energy.

To increase the size and scope of the MEC's facilities, the NJMC began construction of a new Meadowlands Center for Scientific and Environmental Education in November 2006. The center will include wet laboratories, additional classrooms, offices and an observatory. The new facility, to be certified Gold by the U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards, will also be the subject of an ongoing study by Rutgers University to determine the economic and environmental benefits of green buildings.

Highlights of today's presentation included a virtual tour of Project SEE (Senior Environmental Experiences), which brings the natural and human history, ecosystem, and future of the Meadowlands to seniors in assisted living and community facilities through interactive video conferencing. The presentation also featured a day in the life of the Marsh Access Program, a national model for accessibility and assistive technology that adapts MEC programs for people living with disabilities.

"The continued partnership between the NJMC and Ramapo College will not only improving existing programs, but encourage new and exciting ones," said NJMC Commissioner Eleanore Nissley. "There is an environment here that the MEC is helping to save, a rich history it is helping to preserve, and most importantly, generations of people it is helping to teach."

Upcoming programs for public this spring include "Light in the Marsh," an interactive lesson on light and photography at DeKorte Park, "Peek at the Meadowlands Past," a anthropological study of artifacts and peoples of the Meadowlands District, and "Digital Storytelling" to teach young adults how to use computers to present their own family histories.

For more information on the MEC or to register for these programs, contact (201) 460-8300 or log on to [www.njmeadowlands.gov/ec](http://www.njmeadowlands.gov/ec).

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